The Chronicle and Index

OF THE UNITARIAN SOCIETY.

No. 57, Vol. v.] BELFAST, SEPTEMBER 1st, 1885. [For Gratuitous Circulation.

THE Rev. J. C. Street begs to acknowledge receipt of the following contribution in aid of the publication and gratuitous circulation of the *Chronicle and Index*:—Mr. A. W. Grant, Glasgow, 2/6.

THE Rev. F. M'Cammon, the respected minister of Banbridge, has found it necessary to ask for aid in carrying on his ministerial work. His health has not been robust for many years past, and, of late, it has suffered greatly. He therefore has applied that an Assistant and Successor may be appointed. We hope that a good and true man may be found, and that Mr. M'Cammon may long be spared to see the good work of his congregation going on satisfactorily.

THE Missionary Services at Hopeton Street, which began on Sunday, May 31st, were concluded on Sunday, August 23rd. The whole series has been well attended, and the interest was sustained throughout. It is a great pity that these services cannot be continued regularly, for they evidently meet the wants of many people in the neighbourhood. But there are many difficulties in the way—especially financial difficulties. Perhaps at some not distant day it may again be possible to employ the services of a Missionary. Only that is needed to make permanent the good work which is going on at this mission station.

ON Tuesday, August 11th, the pupils in attendance on the Ballee Sunday School were treated to their annual excursion to Ardglass. The weather was on the whole favourable for holiday-making, and the children, with parents and friends, turned out in large numbers, about twenty-two conveyances being engaged to convey them to Ardglass. The Castle grounds were kindly placed at their disposal, and, under the direction of the Rev. J. H. Bibby, a very enjoyable day was spent. After refreshments were served in liberal abundance, numerous games were originated, and the young people seemed to be highly gratified with the entertainment provided. Among those present, besides the respected pastor of the congregation, were the Rev. T. Dunkerley, B.A., Comber; Rev. William Napier, Clough; and the Rev. J. A. Kelly, Rademon. The excursion was a great success, and young and old left with pleasant memories of Ardglass, which has many attractions as a holiday resort.

FAVOURED by good weather and the presence of a large number of friends, the Sunday School in connection with Rademon church celebrated, on the 5th August, one of its most successful annual festivals. The scholars first met in the meeting house, where a short service was conducted and an address delivered by the minister. Then, headed by the Ballynahinch Brass Band, with colours flying and in processional order, the company marched to the well-wooded grounds surrounding Rademon House, kindly thrown open for the occasion by Dr. Davidson. Refreshments having been served and the children and many others photographed in a group, the afternoon was pleasantly spent in games of various kinds. At half-past six tea, with its usual accompaniments, was served to the whole assemblage, numbering from 350 to 400 persons, and afterwards an abundance of fruit, the much appreciated gift of several friends. As the shades of night were falling all assembled in

front of Rademon House, where after a few words from the minister, ringing cheers were given for Dr. and Mrs. Davidson for their kindness and attention, and for the Rev. J. A. Kelly. The band having played "God save the Queen" and the benediction having been pronounced, the company separated evidently well pleased with the day's proceedings.

WE notice with pleasure that the Missionary Conference have commenced a new missionary movement this summer at Llandudno. Many Unitarian families resort there regularly, and it will, no doubt, be a great boon to them as well as to the permanent residents to have Unitarian services conducted there. It is doubtful whether a permanent cause can be established, but good will result from the summer enterprise. It would be a great comfort if similar summer services could be held at the seaside resorts in Ireland; but years pass away and nothing is done to bring about such a result.

THE following paragraphs give an account of "How the Reasonings of an Anxious Soul were Ended":—

"My deliverance began by learning that the gradual conversion of the world during this age was an entirely human invention, totally opposed to the statements of the New Testament, which invariably represents the true Church of Christ as 'sheep among wolves,' a 'little flock,' while '*the whole world* lieth in wickedness;' that the good seed, though sown by the Son of Man Himself, would yield but very little fruit; that the devil would be allowed to render the most part of it unproductive, and to sow tares among the wheat, to leaven the whole of professing Christendom with his false doctrine; that Christ did not pray for the world, but for the little flock which believes on Him; that the mystery of iniquity was already at work in Paul's day, and would continue till the open manifestation of *the wicked one*—'*the man of sin;*' in fact I saw that these days in which we live are called by the Holy Ghost (Gal. i. 4) '*this present evil age*' (it is *aion*, a period of time, not *kosmos*, world), and that *the devil is* '*the god of this age*' (*aion*) (2 Cor. iv. 4), and will continue to be so until its close.

Beloved friends, these terrible truths, themselves astounding and inexplicable to us, settled the whole difficulty for me. It was exactly what I had found this present scene to be—*the devil's age*. That being the fact, I must not look during this period for the *immediate* righteous government of God *manifested* on the earth. God is silent now, though (Ps. 1.) the foundations of the earth are out of course. The devil being the captain of the ship—called '*this present evil world*'—she must go on to destruction at that 'great and terrible day of the Lord,' when our blessed Lord will come to bind up Satan, and execute righteous judgment on those who have rejected His grace.

Why God permits evil at all, and why the devil is the god of this age, are questions which most intelligent children ask their mothers, and is the real rock on which many philosophers, falsely so called, make shipwreck of their souls. These questions a child can ask, and the archangel cannot answer."

Such is the terrible stuff published by orthodox churches—libelling God, and defaming man. We have great work yet to do.

AT the close of Dr. Sadler's address to the students of Manchester New College, at the conclusion of the session of 1884-85, he spoke as follows referring to Dr. Martineau:—

My friends, we all know that this day closes, not the session only, but also something else. It is not for me to give adequate expression to the sorrow we must all feel at such a parting; but I could not sit down without briefly adverting to an event which is foremost in the thoughts of every one of us. Our most revered teacher and leader and friend will not quit the chair which he has so long occupied without knowing well the place he will always have in our hearts, and how profoundly sensible all the students and all the friends of this College are of the inestimable worth of the work he has done—a worth to be reckoned not only by what it has been in the past, but even still more for what we are sure is laid up in it for

the future. For myself, I can truly say that to him more than to any other I owe the depth of my conviction that my faith in Christ, in God, in Immortality has a secure resting-place in the everlasting principles of human nature; to him more than any other my realisation of spiritual freedom, with its high responsibilities, its stimulus to aspiration and endeavour, and its glorious hopes. And who is there among us who would not say the same? In other religious bodies, as well as our own, he is, if I mistake not, the one who above all others is looked to as the champion of the spirit in man, against those who contend that man is a body only; and of man's relation to the divine, against those who maintain that, if the divine be not altogether a delusion, it is, at all events, a blank to us. When heat was applied to an ancient coin, the inscription on which had become illegible, the words *Deo gloria* came out; so he has shown us by the light and warmth of our higher nature the inscription which the Agnostic and the mere Materialist have been unable to read. You, Gentlemen, will cherish the memory of your college days all the more that they were under his fostering care, and that you received his parting words; and those who come after you will think with an allowable envy of the privilege you have enjoyed.

But with all our feeling of regret, there will mingle deep gratitude, that what we must now lose has been continued so long; and that, though he rests from his labours here, we shall have him still amongst us, and not simply the "lengthened memories," which are so precious to us. We shall turn, also, to the thought that though the printed page cannot be all that there is in the living voice, it may reach much farther, and last much longer, and exercise its influence on a much larger scale. Nor can it be without real satisfaction, both to us and our dear and venerated friend himself, that his labours will be carried on by a staff of Professors, to all of whom he has been as a spiritual father, and that in the interests of this College we may have the fullest confidence in the sons thus reared to "hand on the torch of life from one generation to another."

We quote with pleasure the following extract from the sermon entitled, "What is left after the Questionings of our Time?" preached by the Rev. B. Herford, before the British and Foreign Unitarian Association at the last Anniversary:—

"After the battle they call the roll. After the trials of hard times the merchant takes stock to see how he stands. It is well to do this sometimes in the higher realms of mind. I think that in this world of religious ideas and beliefs we have of late years had such a period of conflict and upheaval, and to some extent of misgivings and fears; and I believe a time has come when it is possible—and, if I read things rightly, very encouraging—to pause a moment and ask what is left us, and how we stand, in these greatest subjects of human thought. . . .

To begin with, perhaps the very first thing that has clearly emerged from the uncertainties of modern questioning, is—*Man* himself. It might seem a small consolation to those who felt as if all religion were slipping away from them, to be told that man remains. But it is not so trifling a remainder, after all. They tell of a poor Frenchman, who, when misfortune had apparently stripped him of everything, was asked: 'My poor friend, what is there left to you?' 'Myself,' was the cheery answer. And, in reality, oneself, just this nature and life of ours, as we stand up amid the mystery of things, is quite as important a remainder for the reconstruction of faith as for the reconstruction of fortune.

You know it did not seem quite clear awhile ago that even man was going to remain. At least it was doubtful if anything was going to be left, except various kinds of fibre and tissue. It was declared as in the line of science, and only a little ahead of actual proof, that man is derived directly from the brutes, and ultimately from the primal fire-mists; and it was inferred that, from his fancied spiritual elevation, he had to be put back into the ranks as a mere being of earth like the rest, with no more real power over what he will do or be than a rose has of choosing whether it will be white or red. Now, I do not think I am

exaggerating when I say that all this inference at least is now seen to be entirely baseless. The fact is, that all that Science or Philosophy may discover about man's origin does not affect the reality of what he is. The important thing is, not what humanity has grown from, but what it has grown into. Account for man how you will, you have to account for the whole of him, or at least have to take account of the whole of him. Even if man has to be reduced to the terms of matter, still the only effect is, that the definition of matter has to be spiritualized, so as to include all that before the world called heart and conscience and soul. For, the first life that you come across that has manifestly in it that quality which we call goodness—that is gentle and thoughtful and kind, that stands up against the wrong, and holds to the right even in the face of loss or pain, and that has a happy thankfulness and a patient trust—why, such a life scatters all doubts about man's higher nature to the winds. The old theological ideas of man's higher nature may have to go; the idea of man's having been created all at once perfect, and having then by his first sin fallen into total depravity and hopeless ruin—that may have to go, I think is largely gone; but man, as he is, remains, with this mingled struggling nature, and among its factors those that we call conscience and soul, and all the striving in which these subtler elements reach onwards. Man remains—not only in these broad tendencies of the race, but in the highest life of the race—man, with his restless battling for the right; man, with his growing principles of kindness and beneficence; man, in his upward reaching thoughts of trust and worship; man, in the hero, the sage, the saint, the Christ—man at his highest;—and he thus remains, not as an accident or an extreme, but as that to which the race is tending, which the very existence of the race means. And if, indeed, all this has come by slow, orderly development, through the moulding and pressure of the facts of the universe—and therefore corresponding to the facts—then all the more are these great lines of moral and spiritual movement unfailing indications, not only of what is in man, but of what is in the universe around him.

And so it is, that not only Man remains, but *God* remains. Many of the old ideas of God may have had to go—I think they have—but I do not hesitate to affirm that all that ever was essential and best in the thought of God stands on a firmer foundation to-day than ever before. It is curious to trace how this has come to be, for twenty-five years ago the common mind was possessed by a vague apprehension that the tendencies of scientific discovery were gradually leaving no place for Theism. Already Comte had said that 'Science conducts God with honour to its frontiers, thanking Him for His provisional services;' and when Evolution came, multitudes jumped at once to the inference that, supposing it proved, it would supply 'an explanation of the universe without God.' But no one can look at the attitude of science to-day, or at the special position of the evolution-theory, without seeing that all such inferences were wholly groundless. I speak of this, not as for a moment pretending to criticise the reports of science, but simply noting what they are. And this is what I am struck with: that, however far back or however far in investigation may be pushed, it still leaves us as much as ever in the hold of that haunting mystery of how this marvellous universe has come to what it is, every atom and fibre of it throbbing with meaning and purpose. The solemn process of Creation just as surely obliges us to think of some mysterious power within it, whether we think of it as concentrated in the mighty fiat of a brief six days, or watch it along the slow evolution of a million ages. Nay, the very terms by which scientific thinkers try to indicate that mysterious power without defining it—such as Clifford's 'mind-stuff,' or Matthew Arnold's 'stream of tendency'—all indicate, not merely a mystery, but a sense of its working in those very ways which have led mankind to call it by some name of Deity. I suppose that, of all living thinkers, Herbert Spencer has looked into this mystery with most freedom from any desire to explain it in any religious sense, and yet his latest word

about it is, that we are ever 'in the presence of an infinite and eternal Energy from which all things proceed.' That is enough! Not all that religion needs, but all that we need for science to leave us, in order to justify religion. For with this one firm spot to start from, the mind is led inevitably onwards. Spencer himself began by simply calling it 'the unknowable,' but has now got as far as this 'infinite and eternal Energy.' Matthew Arnold goes further, and is sure that it is a power that 'makes for righteousness.' Others, while still unable to say 'God,' delight in extolling the glory and beneficence of 'Nature.' And I recently heard of one of the most noted and earnest agnostics of America, who said to a friend that really he believed he must take to using the word 'God' again, in order to avoid the necessity for constant explanations as to how much he believed about this unknown energy. And if it be so with those who try to look at the whole matter in the dry light of intellect, may we not feel that for the common heart of man the real thought of God does stand firmer to-day than ever before—yes, firmer, because it has been questioned as never before, and still every line of questioning leads us back towards it—towards the central, essential idea? The formal doctrines men have shaped out about God may have to go. The old doctrine of God as a Trinity is practically almost gone. All definitions of God constructed out of texts may go. But, when everything of that kind is cleared away, it still remains that the ultimate source and sustaining power of things is Infinite Energy, out of which we see ever proceeding, not only order and beauty, but life and thought and goodness. It is not any logical proof of God in that fulness of the thought to which the holiest souls have attained, but it is a strong assurance at the solid base of things that in 'feeling after Him' along the old lines of religious thought, we are not stretching vain hands into infinite emptiness; that if we still only touch the hem of the Unsearchable, that Unsearchable is all that men have ever meant by God—and more.

Again, look at the great thought of *Immortality*. I suppose that there has been more doubt and questioning of Immortality in our time than ever in the world before. And yet may I not say that, to-day, Immortality stands firmer than ever? It stands firmer, because, while it was always affirmed by Religion, it was thought at the beginning of this period that Science showed almost insuperable difficulties in the way; but now the latest word of Science is that there is really no reason against it, and we are left with the full force of the vast testimonies from the religious side of man's nature. This suspensory verdict of Science is the more significant, because it was here especially that a distinctly negative verdict seemed possible. It was always admitted that no science of man's, reaching so little way into the mighty universe, could prove that there is no God. But it seemed as if, with this little frame of man to deal with, it might be possible to track life to its furthest recess, to make out what it is, and definitely ascertain whether it is anything that can survive the body. But what has been found is, that this wonderful thing 'Life' is something of which in the last resort Science can simply tell us nothing. It certainly need not trouble us that Science cannot find out that life is to survive, because it is equally powerless to find out what life is, at all; and yet this is a reality, the very greatest reality in the whole make-up of us. Perhaps the most noteworthy recent word on the subject from the scientific side is that little work of Prof. John Fiske's on 'The Destiny of Man,' and he distinctly says, that the scientific evidence is even 'against the materialist as far as it goes;' and he adds, that the assumption that the life of the soul ends with the life of the body 'is perhaps the most colossal instance of baseless assumption that is known to the history of Philosophy.' In the same way the difficulties which Evolution seemed at first to be raising against Immortality are disappearing on closer inspection. If man were really evolved from the brutes, it seemed an almost insuperable difficulty—how could the perishing brute-life develop at some point into life no longer perishable? But then this ceases to be any serious perplexity, as it is

seen that, if Evolution be true, it must already, somewhere along its ascent from the primal fire-mists, have done a still more wonderful thing—in developing life at all. So that the supposed difficulties from the side of Science are clearing away, and we are left with the full force, not of mere religious *arguments*, but of those religious *tendencies* in our higher nature which have ever caused the belief in Immortality. What a world of suggestion as to the force of those tendencies there is in that word of Dr. Martineau's: 'Men do not believe in Immortality because it has ever been proved; but they are for ever trying to prove it because they cannot help believing it!' There is the broad fact. This conviction of some life-to-come has grown up as a part of man's orderly development, has held its place even when distorted into forms of terror that men would have gladly disbelieved, has been inwoven with all man's loftiest aims and motives, and in the highest and holiest of our race has become a glad triumphant certainty. Against this mighty world-growth what would weigh even the keenest perplexities of a generation? But even these very perplexities are found not to touch the innermost fact of life. And so the faith in Immortality remains. Many of the forms into which men have shaped their thoughts of it will have to pass away. Its lurid Hells, like its pearly gates and golden streets of Heaven, are seen to be but figures. The whole thought of the eternity of punishment is fast becoming incredible. But that this wonderful life which has somehow come to be in man does not perish with the body, is still to live on in that development which, even at its best, is here only begun—that stands more secure in human faith than ever before.

And so it is with the Bible, and with that great Teacher in whom the light of the Bible culminates into the light of the world. *The Bible* remains—and remains, if I read the signs of human thought aright, in an even nobler position of religious value and helpfulness than ever. Awhile ago it seemed doubtful if this would be so. Men had put the Bible on a false pedestal. They had set it up as an infallible oracle—all alike inspired, all the very words of God, every sentence, on whatever subject, a little divine proposition. And the pedestal was being pulled away. Science was disproving the Bible cosmogony; history was discrediting many of its narratives; criticism was showing that hardly a book in it is what used to be thought. So, altogether, it seemed as if it was about to be overthrown from any place of supreme reverence and helpfulness. And yet is it so to-day? I think the very opposite is the case. The vessel is found to be earthly and human, but it is not the less a heavenly treasure that is in it. Why, already, on this human side, is springing up a new study of the Bible, not less reverent and far more living. Even from those who used to be regarded as undermining it, come testimonies to the impossibility of doing without it. What a significant utterance is that of Prof. Huxley, published awhile ago, but, as I happen to know, expressing exactly what he thinks to-day:—

'I have always been strongly in favour of secular education, in the sense of education without theology, but I must confess I have been no less seriously perplexed to know by what practical measures the religious feeling which is the essential basis of conduct was to be kept up, in the present utterly chaotic state of opinion on these matters, without the use of the Bible. The Pagan moralists lack life and colour, and even the noble stoic, Marcus Antoninus, is too high and refined for an ordinary child. Take the Bible as a whole; make the severest deductions which fair criticism can dictate for shortcomings and positive errors; eliminate, as a sensible teacher would do if left to himself, all that it is not desirable for children to occupy themselves with, and there still remains in this old literature a vast residuum of moral beauty and grandeur. And then consider the great historical fact that for three centuries this book has been woven into the life of all that is best and noblest in English history; that it has become the national epic of Britain, and is as familiar to noble and simple from John-o'-Groat's House to Land's End as Dante and Tasso once were to the Italians; that it is written in the noblest

and purest English, and abounds in exquisite beauties of mere literary form; and, finally, that it forbids the veriest hind who never left his village to be ignorant of the existence of other countries and other civilizations, and of a great past stretching back to the furthest limits of the oldest nations in the world. By the study of what other book could children be so much humanized and made to feel that each figure in that vast historical procession fills, like themselves, but a momentary space in the interval between two eternities?'*

This, from one of the chief expounders of that Science which many have thought was to replace the Bible by the surer revelations of Nature. But the fact is—and it is a very important point, which I do not think has been sufficiently noticed—that the real effect of the scientific progress of our time has been to make, not *our* Bible only, but *all* the Scriptures of man's higher life, of more importance now than ever, not less. For, see! men thought that physical science was going to supply the exact truth on moral and religious things as on material things. But they find it cannot. It can tell them about substances and forces, though even before it has got half-way through these it is among realities which elude its grasp, and of which it can take cognizance only by faith. But when we go to it to ask about right, and kindness, and love, and reverence, it is absolutely powerless; it cannot deny that they are, but simply can tell us nothing about them. In the whole interpretation of the higher life, Science cannot help us, and admits that it cannot. And so we are thrown back with a new interest upon the developments of that higher life itself, upon the great faiths and lives which have been its outcome, and upon all the Scriptures in which it has spoken to the world. These old Bibles of many peoples constitute, all together, a manifold irresistible evidence of the reality of Religion—the material of a Science as real, indeed, if not as capable of the same rigid methods, as that of outward nature. But at the same time, while all these ancient Scriptures thus become more valuable than ever before, they show just as clearly the unapproachable greatness of the Bible. This also is the more striking because hardly looked for. A generation ago, Oriental scholars had held up so many pearls of beautiful religious thought which they had dug out of other Scriptures, that there was a growing tendency to believe that if those other Scriptures were equally accessible we should find them just as good as the Bible—perhaps, some of them, better. Well, we have them now. We have them in that grand series of translations of 'The Sacred Books of the East.' But the fact is, that nothing in our time has so placed the reverence for the Bible upon a rock as that great work. Because now we see that those gems of Oriental thought are really exceedingly rare, while the general character of the huge literatures in which they are embedded is dry, pedantic and obscure beyond all telling. Clear above them all, clearer to-day than ever before, stands the old Book of Books, the Scriptures of the world's noblest line of religious life, voicing alike the spirit of man and the Spirit of God with an ever weightier certainty and clearness, and speaking to us in tones accentuated by the heart-beats of the world's best life, and with a solemn authoritativeness which we can never feel in any utterance of to-day. So the Bible stands firmer to-day than ever before. It stands firmer because this diviner element is cleared of much that, when claimed as equally divine, used to make the whole precarious or misleading. And there is still every divine element that ever there was. There is still every word that came out of the lofty Mount of Vision and the inspired communion of holy souls with God; there is still every one of the grand old words of praise, and righteousness, and strength, and resting in the Lord. Laws that have inwoven themselves with the moral fibre of the world; Psalms that have echoed along the valleys and from the mountain heights of human experience; Prophecies that have thundered through struggling ages like the trumpet-tones of God; Gospels of faithful living and bright glistening hope, that have made a whole new life for man,—all these remain; and as we learn to pass by their setting, often in the crude and obsolete ideas of the world's childhood, these diviner elements stand out clearer and stronger and more divine than ever."

* Huxley's Critiques and Addresses, 1873, p. 51.

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Printed by JOHN A. MURPHY, 16, Howard Street, for the Unitarian Society, and Published at their Depository, 16, Queen's Arcade, Belfast.